TL 1189

FIFTH CHRISTIAN CONSULTATION ON EAST TIMOR
BRUSSELS, 5 to 7 September 1989

JUSTICE OR DEVELOPMENT FOR EAST TIMOR: A MORAL CHALLENGE

Preamble:

The issue of East Timor is closely monitored by a group of Church organizations which, initially at the request of the Dutch Justice and Peace Commission, have met annually since 1985 to address the question of Christian responsibility towards East Timor. This network of Church organizations was called together in response to the appeal for Church solidarity by Mgr. Belo. It adopted as its terms of reference, Pope John Paul II's statement, when he accepted the credentials of Ambassador General Sastrapoespita in July 1984, with regard to the need to preserve the ethnic, cultural and religious identity of the people of East Timor. These consultations which permit different groups within the Christian Churches to meet together, to learn more about the situation in East Timor, to share their preoccupations, and to seek to resolve the difficulties they face in dealing with an issue which involves fundamental moral concerns and complex relationships with other Churches are private. No minutes or reports of the discussions are made public.

The first and second consultation of Christians concerned with East Timor (Amersfoort 1985 and 1986) aimed to raise the question on East Timor in Christian circles. The first consultation offered those present the possibility to examine the situation in East Timor and to reflect on the role which they, as representative organisations within the European Christian Churches, could play in showing their sympathy and concern with the Churches in East Timor. The second consultation was mainly devoted to the drafting of a common statement "East Timor, a Christian Reflection". This statement, published by the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) and other Christian bodies was approved during the Third Consultation in Geneva, 1987. This document has been used to stimulate discussion, provoke criticism and generate support. The Geneva consultation also looked in the Human Rights issue, given the specific character and opportunities provided by the presence of the internal organisations. The fourth consultation, held in Lisbon, focussed on refugee testimonies in view of the presence of the Timorese community in Lisbon. Special attention was paid to the Portuguese involvement in East Timor.

Given that Indonesia has recently emphasized its investment in "developing" East Timor economically, the fifth conference, to be held in Brussels, will deal with the question "what does this idea of development mean, and how is it related to the commitment we have to Justice". The presence of the European Parliament, the European Commission and Brussels based European development agencies influenced the selection of the theme of the fifth consultation.

Besides the general theme of the conference special points of attention will be:

- the human rights situation in East Timor in view of the recent letter (5 December 1988) of Mgr. Belo in which he accused the authorities in Jakarta of barbarism, stating that "assertions that human rights abuses had ended were "lying propaganda". In a letter to the Apostolic Nuncio

in Jakarta (16 April 1989), Mgr Belo stated "we live under the psychological pressure of the dictatorship.. we have witnessed these selfsame abuses every year... we speak to the authorities but the result is always the same".

- the Timorese right to self-determination in view of the letter of Mgr. Belo to Perez de Cuellar, General Secretary of the United Nations (6 February 1989) in which he requests the Secretary General to initiate in Timor the process of decolonization that is the most normal and democratic, namely the holding of a referendum. According to Mgr. Belo "the Timorese people must be heard through a plebiscite concerning their future. Up to now the people have not been consulted. It has been others who have spoken in the name of the people. It is Indonesia who said that the Timorese people have chosen integration but the people of Timor themselves have never said this".

- the relations between East Timor and the Vatican in the light of the announced visit of Pope John Paul to Indonesia and East Timor this coming October (see enclosed paper)

Tentative Programme

September 5

from 6pm onward:

- arrival of participants
- supper
- update on recent developments

September 6

AM: Close meeting on the theme "Development and Justice"
PM: Open meeting: update on East Timor (with participants from the EP, EC and political fractions)
Evening: Audio-visuals and witnesses

September 7

AM: Closed meeting: Planning - Drafting of common statement
PM: Formal closure of the consultation. Delegations to EP and EC
Evening: Open Info-evening with info stands and resource persons

September 8

Press Conference